

Description

Manufacturing Method of Fluid Dynamic Pressure Bearing

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a manufacturing method of a fluid dynamic pressure bearing used as a bearing device for a spindle motor or the like of a hard disk drive device, and more particularly to an oil filling method into a bearing gap.

BACKGROUND ART

[0002] As a bearing for a motor that requires a high rotational precision such as a spindle motor used in a disk drive device for driving a recording disk such as a hard disk or the like or as a motor for driving a polygon mirror in a laser beam printer, various fluid dynamic pressure bearings have conventionally been proposed that utilize fluid pressure of lubricating fluid such as oil or the like intervened

between a shaft and a sleeve for supporting both of them so as to be relatively rotatable.

[0003] Fig. 1 shows one example of a motor using such a fluid dynamic pressure bearing. A motor using the conventional fluid dynamic pressure bearing comprises a pair of radial bearing sections 4, 4, formed so as to be spaced apart from each other in the axial direction, between an outer peripheral surface of a shaft 2 that is integrally formed with a rotor 1 and an inner peripheral surface of a sleeve 3 in which the shaft 2 is rotatably inserted. Further, a pair of thrust bearing sections 7, 7 are disposed respectively between an upper surface of a disk-like thrust plate 5 that projects from the outer peripheral surface of one edge section of the shaft 1 in the outward direction of the radius direction and a flat surface of a step portion formed on the sleeve 2, and between the lower surface of the thrust plate 5 and a thrust bush 6 that closes one opening of the sleeve 2.

[0004] A bearing gap that is a series of minute gaps is formed between the shaft 2 and the thrust plate 5 and between the sleeve 3 and the thrust bush 6. Oil 9 serving as lubricating fluid is continuously retained in the bearing gap without a break.

[0005] Herringbone grooves 41, 41 and 71, 71 formed by joining a pair of spiral grooves are formed at the radial bearing sections 4, 4 and the thrust bearing sections 7, 7, whereby maximum dynamic pressure is produced according to the rotation of the rotor 1 at the central section of the bearing section where a joint section of the spiral groove is positioned, thereby holding a load acted on the rotor 1.

[0006] The motor described above has a taper seal section 8 in the vicinity of the upper edge section of the sleeve 3 that is positioned opposite to the thrust bearing sections 7, 7 in the axial direction, so that the surface tension of the oil and the atmospheric pressure are balanced to form an interface. Specifically, the internal pressure of the oil in this taper seal section 8 is kept to be the pressure substantially equal to the atmospheric pressure.

[0007] The following method has been proposed for filling the oil 9 retained between the thrust plate 5 and the shaft 2 and between the sleeve 3 and the thrust bush 6 of the bearing section having the above-mentioned construction. Firstly, a vacuum chamber having the oil stored therein is pressure-reduced, and then, with this state, a stirring machine in the oil is operated to perform a stirring and degassing.

After the pressure in the vacuum chamber that supports the bearing is reduced to a vacuum level, the oil is supplied to the bearing-supporting vacuum chamber, and suitable amount of oil is placed at the bearing opening such as the taper seal section 8 or the like of the bearing section under a reduced pressure environment. Thereafter, the environment in the bearing-supporting vacuum chamber is returned to the atmospheric pressure, thereby filling the oil in the bearing gap of the fluid dynamic pressure bearing by utilizing a atmospheric pressure.

[0008] However, even in the oil filling method as described above, oil often bubbles during filling process. This is because it is extremely difficult, particularly in a mass production process in a factory, to remove the dissolved air to a degree of not forming air bubbles even by stirring and degassing the oil under the reduced pressure. The oil bubbling during the oil filling process hinders a smooth supply from the vacuum chamber having the oil stored therein to the bearing-supporting vacuum chamber. Further, when bubbling occurs at the stage where the oil reaches the bearing-supporting vacuum chamber, the oil may be scattered in a spraying manner in the oil vacuum chamber, thereby staining the bearing and the inside of

the chamber with the oil.

[0009] The degassing level of the oil is somewhat enhanced by exposing the oil under the reduced pressure environment and performing a stirring and degassing. However, an effective degassing cannot be carried out by the degassing under a state where the oil is stored in the vacuum chamber, since the area exposed to the reduced pressure environment to the volume of the oil, i.e., the surface area of the oil is limited. In this case, it is possible to increase the area to the volume of the oil by a method of using a large-sized vacuum chamber, or by decreasing the amount of oil stored in the chamber. However, these methods cannot be said to be realistic since they deteriorate a productivity caused by the increase in size of the oil filling device or by the increase in an oil replenishing frequency.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0010] The present invention aims to provide a manufacturing method of a fluid dynamic pressure bearing that can prevent the likelihood of air bubbles during an oil filling process.

[0011] In the manufacturing method of a fluid dynamic pressure bearing according to the present invention, a first vacuum

chamber, that stores oil and performs a degassing, is pressure-reduced, and at least at the time of completing the pressure-reduction, the pressure in the first vacuum chamber is made smaller than the pressure in a second vacuum chamber at the time of the operation of supplying the oil into a bearing. This provides that higher pressure is applied on the oil upon the operation of supplying the oil than upon the operation of degassing the oil. The higher pressure restrains the occurrence of air bubbles in the oil at the supplying operation.

[0012] According to another manufacturing method of the present invention, even after the first vacuum chamber is pressure-reduced to obtain a pressure not more than a predetermined pressure, the reduced-pressure state is kept, and with this state, oil is supplied to a second vacuum chamber to thereby fill in the bearing. The predetermined pressure in the first vacuum chamber is smaller than the pressure in a second vacuum chamber at the time of the operation of supplying the oil into a bearing. The first vacuum chamber is kept to be pressure-reduced, whereby a more perfect degassing of oil can be attained.

[0013] In the present invention, a valve mechanism or pump mechanism for sending the oil to the second vacuum

chamber may be disposed on the way of a pipe that joins the first vacuum chamber and the second vacuum chamber. The oil can be sent to the second vacuum chamber by this valve or pump against the pressure difference.

Thereby the oil is supplied to the second vacuum chamber more certainly.

[0014] In the present invention, gravity may be used for supplying the oil. This can provide a smooth supply of oil. For example, supposing that the density of the oil is about 1 g/cm^3 , the pressure can be increased by 1000 Pa due to the height difference of 10 cm. Making a suitable height difference enables to supply oil to the second vacuum chamber against the pressure difference between the first vacuum chamber and the second vacuum chamber. Combining the valve mechanism to this can provide an accurate supply of oil.

[0015] In the present invention, oil may be dripped into the first vacuum chamber. Oil is dripped, whereby the surface per volume exposed to the reduced pressure environment is temporarily increased, thereby promoting the degassing. Further, droplets of oil impinging on the bottom of the chamber or on the liquid level of the stored oil become a more minute splash. This phenomena also assists the de-

gassing of oil.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0016] Fig. 1 is a constructional view of a motor having a fluid dynamic pressure bearing; and

[0017] Fig. 2 is a conceptual view of an oil filling apparatus corresponding to an embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0018] A manufacturing method of a fluid dynamic pressure bearing device according to an embodiment of the present invention will be explained with reference to drawings. It should be noted that the fluid dynamic pressure bearing 10 is the same as that shown in Fig. 1, so that the explanation of its construction is omitted for avoiding the repeated description.

[0019] In the manufacturing method of the fluid dynamic pressure bearing according to the embodiment, a valve B1 is firstly opened and a vacuum pump P1 is operated, whereby air in a first vacuum chamber 100 that is an oil tank is exhausted to be pressure-reduced to a predetermined degree of vacuum PL1. After the reduced pressure level in the first vacuum chamber 100 is confirmed to reach the degree of vacuum PL1, a valve B2 is opened to

thereby start a supply of oil L from an oil supplying chamber 102 to the first vacuum chamber 100. At this time, a capillary 104 for supplying the oil L from the oil supplying chamber 102 to the first vacuum chamber 100 has a needle shape having a diameter to a degree in which the oil L is retained by a capillary phenomena. Further, pressure PL_2 in the oil supplying chamber 102 is kept to be slightly higher than the reduced pressure level PL_1 in the first vacuum chamber 100. Accordingly, the oil L retained in the capillary 104 is dripped as droplets into the first vacuum chamber 100 due to the pressure difference between the first vacuum chamber 100 and the oil supplying chamber 102.

[0020] The oil L is naturally dripped into the first vacuum chamber 100 with its internal pressure higher than the reduced pressure level PL_1 due to the pressure difference between the reduced pressure level PL_1 in the first vacuum chamber 100 and the pressure PL_2 in the oil supplying chamber 102. Therefore, the oil L enters into the first vacuum chamber 100 from the capillary 104 as a droplet, and at the same time, air dissolved in the oil L expands by a cavitation phenomena to form air bubbles. However, the oil L is dripped from the capillary 104 having a diameter to a

degree in which the capillary phenomena is acted, whereby the volume of the oil L dripping as a droplet is extremely small. On the other hand, the entire surface of the dripped oil L is exposed to the vacuum environment under the reduced pressure level PL_1 , so that air bubbles are easily opened in the first vacuum chamber 100, thereby degassing the oil L .

[0021] Droplets of oil L impinging on the bottom of the first vacuum chamber 100 or on the liquid level of the oil L previously dripped and stored in the first vacuum chamber 100 become a more minute splash to be scattered, thereby further promoting the degassing. Therefore, the degassing process of the oil L by the drip that also uses the vacuum degassing as described above is more efficient compared to the conventional degassing process using only the vacuum degassing or the degassing process using both the vacuum degassing and the degassing by stirring. Thereby the air dissolved in the oil is surely eliminated.

[0022] When the oil L of a predetermined amount is stored in the first vacuum chamber 100, the fluid dynamic pressure bearing 10 having no oil filled therein is inserted into a second vacuum chamber 106, that is an oil injecting

chamber, from an opening not shown and is placed at the predetermined position. After the opening is closed, a valve B3 is opened, and then, a vacuum pump P2 start to exhaust air in the second vacuum chamber 106 and the bearing gap of the fluid dynamic pressure bearing 10. When reaching a reduced pressure level PL3 set in advance, the valve B3 is closed and the vacuum pump P2 is stopped to thereby start the filling of the oil L. It should be noted that the pressure in the second vacuum chamber 106 can be reduced by using the vacuum pump P1 that is used for pressure-reducing the first vacuum chamber 100.

[0023] In order to perform the filling of the oil *L*, an oil injecting opening 108 is firstly positioned above the taper seal section 8 of the fluid dynamic pressure bearing 10 by moving in parallel or by rotating a movable member 110. Thereafter, a valve B4 is opened to supply the degassed oil *L* stored in the first vacuum chamber 100 via a pipe 112. In this case, a needle valve 114 (for example, BP-107D manufactured by Ace Giken Co., Ltd.) is operated to carried out the supply in order to accurately send a first amount of oil V1 set in advance to the oil injecting opening 108.

[0024] Then, the oil *L* supplied from the first vacuum chamber

100 to the needle valve 114 is dripped into the taper seal section 8 of the fluid dynamic pressure bearing 10 from the oil injecting opening 108. Next, a valve B5 is opened for a predetermined time to flow in dust-proof open air by filter means or the like, and then, the atmospheric pressure in the second vacuum chamber 106 is increased from the reduced pressure level PL3. At this time, the bearing gap of the fluid dynamic pressure bearing 10 is in a state of being sealed by the oil L dripped into the taper seal section 8, so that the pressure in the bearing gap is kept to be the reduced pressure level PL3. Therefore, a pressure difference occurs between the pressure in the bearing gap and the increased pressure in the second vacuum chamber 106, by which the amount of dripped oil V1 is pressed into the bearing gap.

[0025] Subsequently, a camera 116 is moved to a position where the inside of the taper seal section 8 can be observed by moving in parallel or rotating a movable member 118, observing the amount of the oil L filled in the bearing gap by the above-mentioned process. A second amount of oil V2, that is an adding amount of oil required to supply an optimum amount of oil L to the fluid dynamic pressure bearing 10, is determined based upon the result of this obser-

vation. Then, the valve B3 is opened again and the vacuum pump P2 is operated, whereby the air in the vacuum chamber 106 is exhausted to reduce the pressure therein to the reduced pressure level PL3. After this pressure-reduction is completed again, the second oil amount V2 is filled again in the bearing gap by the same manner as the filling process of the oil amount V1.

[0026] The fluid dynamic pressure bearing 10 to which the filling of the predetermined amount of oil L is completed as described above is taken away from the second vacuum chamber 106 from the opening section not shown. Although the above-mentioned explanation is made about the case where the filling of the oil L to the fluid dynamic pressure bearing 10 is performed two times, it can be carried out three times or more. Further, the oil is filled in the bearing gap in a somewhat greater amount than the predetermined oil filling amount, and the excessive filling amount may be absorbed and collected by confirming the interface position of the oil L in the taper seal section 8 by the camera 116.

[0027] The important point in the filling of the oil L to the bearing gap is that the pressure in the first vacuum chamber 100 is surely reduced to be lower than the pressure in the sec-

ond vacuum chamber 106, i.e., the relationship of the reduced pressure level $PL1 > \text{reduced pressure level } PL3$ is established, at the time of completing the pressure-reduction.

[0028] In case where the relationship between the reduced pressure level $PL1$ and $PL3$ in each vacuum chamber 100 and 106 is such that the reduced pressure level $PL1 < \text{reduced pressure level } PL3$, i.e., in case where the pressure in the first vacuum chamber 100 is higher than the pressure in the second vacuum chamber 106, upon supplying the oil L to the second vacuum chamber 106 from the first vacuum chamber 100, slightly remaining air in the oil L forms air bubbles by a cavitation phenomena due to the pressure difference, thereby spouting out in the second vacuum chamber 106 from the oil injecting opening 108. In case where the fluid dynamic pressure bearing 10 is applied as a bearing device for a motor in a hard disk drive device or the like used under a clean environment, the spouting oil L kept to be adhered pollutes the clean environment.

Therefore, it is required to wipe the inside of the second vacuum chamber 106 or the surface of the fluid dynamic pressure bearing 10. Moreover, in case where the bubbling phenomena is caused in the pipe 112, the oil L is

broken by the air bubbles in the pipe 112, so that the oil *L* cannot smoothly be supplied toward the oil injecting opening 108. These problems cause a serious reduction in productivity of the fluid dynamic pressure bearing 10.

[0029] On the other hand, the relationship of $PL1 > PL3$ is established between the reduced pressure level $PL1$ in the first vacuum chamber 100 and the reduced pressure level $PL3$ in the second vacuum chamber, whereby the oil *L* is transported toward the side where the pressure is higher (the degree of vacuum is lower) successively during the oil filling process, thereby being capable of surely preventing the occurrence of bubbling phenomena. In this case, the pressure in the second vacuum chamber 106 wherein the oil is filled into the bearing gap of the fluid dynamic pressure bearing 10 is reduced to be not more than 1000 Pa, and more preferably to be about 1000 Pa, whereby air is prevented to be melted again in the oil *L* when the oil *L* is dripped from the oil injecting opening 108 into the taper seal section 8 of the fluid dynamic pressure bearing 10 to thereby be filled in the bearing gap. Therefore, the filling process of the oil *L* is completed without deteriorating the degassing level of the oil *L*. Accordingly, the occurrence of air bubbles can be restrained even after the operation is

started with the fluid dynamic pressure bearing 10 built in as a bearing device of a motor.

[0030] It should be noted that, in this case, the reduced pressure in the first vacuum chamber 100 whose pressure is reduced to the reduced pressure level PL1 that is higher than the reduced pressure level PL3 in the second vacuum chamber 106 is preferably set to be not more than 30 Pa. Setting the reduced pressure level PL1 in the first vacuum chamber 100 to be higher as described above makes it possible to enhance the degassing level in the degassing process of the oil *L* by the above-mentioned dripping.

[0031] Although the embodiment of the manufacturing method of the fluid dynamic pressure bearing according to the present invention has been explained above, the invention is not limited to the embodiment. Various modifications or amendments are possible without departing from the scope of the invention, and further, the invention can be applied to fluid dynamic pressure bearings having various configurations.